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SUBJECT: TURKISH MEDIA REACTION
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2009

Media Highlights: IMF Protests in Istanbul; Geithner Says US Key to Crisis; Armenia Diaspora Protests; Iran Missed Lessons; Democratic Initiative Dents AKP Support; Erdogan vs. Dogan Media --"We are not Al Capone"

IMF Protests in Istanbul: All TV channels mesmerized by live coverage Tuesday morning of IMF protests in Istanbul. CNN Turk reports that riot police dispersed some 5,000 anti-globalization protestors when they tried to march on the convention center where the IMF-World Bank meetings are being held. Bystanders were affected when police used water cannons and tear gas to disperse the group.

Geithner: "The Way Out for Crisis Depends On US."
Mainstream Hurriyet carries an interview with the US Secretary of Treasury Tim Geithner during the World Bank-IMF annual meetings in Istanbul. The paper notes, "Secretary Geithner said in a realistic manner that it's US' responsibility for the economic crisis and that the US is working hard for the recovery." He also emphasized "how dramatically the US stance on major problems has changed during post-Bush period." IMF's role, the future of the USD and G-20 were among the topics discussed in the interview.

Armenia: Diaspora Protests Reconciliation Efforts and Sargsian Tour
Mainstream Sabah, Vatan, Hurriyet widely cover protests against Armenian President Sargsian in Los Angeles yesterday. In "Diaspora Fury Prevents Bern" Hurriyet opines that mass protests in the U.S. prevented an official announcement of the Zurich Turkey-Armenia protocols signing that was widely expected yesterday from Bern. Papers note that 12,000 people protested the Turkey-Armenia protocol signing and Sargsian's goodwill trip to explain the Turkish-Armenia normalization process to the Armenia diaspora in the US. Nevertheless, media reported that both foreign ministers - Davutoglu and Nalbandian - claimed no change of plans and predicted that the protocols will be signed in Zurich on October 10.

Editorial Commentary on Turkey-Armenia and the Kurdish Democratic Initiative

Hurriyet's Ertugrul Ozkok gives strong support for the normalization

process: "Just like how the Armenian president was booed in the U.S., similar things will happen to Turkey's PM as well but none of these should discourage the normalization process. Political courage is the right path to pursue for progress in democracies." Similar encouragement also came from Yavuz Donat (mainstream Sabah): "The presidency is making every preparation based on the assumption that the Armenian president will come even though it is not yet officially announced."

Regarding the government's Kurdish initiative, pundits have begun expressing regret over the DTP's "uncompromising" approach. In Islamist oriented Yeni Safak, Ali Bayramoglu called on the DTP to change its rhetoric "otherwise the benchmarks for success of the government's democratic initiative will have to be lowered significantly." In liberal Radikal, Murat Yetkin talks about the possibility of a backfire for the government since DTP is not softening its position: "Given the current parameters, this democratic initiative may not be advantageous for the government at the end of the day. It remains to be seen whether PM Erdogan has a contingency plan against this possibility."

Iran: Missed Lessons

The Turkish press continues to comment on the aftermath of P5+1 talks. In "Lessons Not Taken From Iran" mainstream Hurriyet columnist Mehmet Yilmaz regrets that in the US "the mistake of Iraq is now being repeated" with another mistake on Iran: "There is ongoing psychological warfare in the American press about Iran. This demonstrates that no lesson was taken from the Iraq mistake and public opinion is now being shaped negatively on Iran."

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Democratic Initiative Dents AKP votes in west, increases in east
Mainstream Milliyet carries on its front page a survey conducted by Pollmark company, which canvassed the views of 1500 people on the GOT's 'democratic initiative' regarding the Kurdish minority. According to the survey, 48 percent of those interviewed support the initiative, while 35 percent oppose and 17 percent are indecisive. In addition, eighty percent of AK Party supporters, 45 percent of CHP supporters and 25 to 30 percent of MHP supporters support the initiative. The poll shows that the initiative pulled the AK Party's votes in the Aegean, Mediterranean and Western Marmara regions down 3 to 5 points but increased it in the eastern parts of the country by 20 percent.

Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet and mainstream Aksam carry a survey conducted by the "Wise Men Strategic Research Center," (Bilgesam) with 8607 Kurdish-origin Turks in 17 eastern and southeastern provinces. In response to whether Kurds should be given independence, 90.3 percent of the respondents said "No," and only 9.7 said "Yes." On whether the PKK's imprisoned leader Ocalan should be released, 35.31 percent approved while 74.7 percent opposed. One out of every three respondents "trust" the Kurdish DTP while one out of every six trust the PKK. The poll also shows 67.6 percent of the respondents said they trust the state.

Dogan Holding: Files Injunction Requests and Says "We Are Not Al Capone!"

HaberTurk reports that Dogan Media Group has filed five law suits for the injunction of both the TRY3.7bn tax fine and the TRY4.8bn collateral assessment. According to the daily, Dogan Group applied to the Istanbul Tax Court with the five different cases in order to head-off Friday's deadline for payment of the collateral fine. If the court does not place an injunction on this deadline, the Tax Office may apply for a temporary order to seize Dogan Group's assets up to the amount of the lawsuit until the case is resolved.

Meanwhile, Dogan Media Holding issued a written statement by email late on Oct. 5 that expresses grave concern about PM Erdogan's analogy between Al Capone and Aydin Dogan made in an interview with the Wall Street Journal. The WSJ said that PM Erdogan defended his government's crippling \$3.2 billion additional demand in fines and penalties against the country's largest media business, comparing the case with the U.S. pursuit of gangster Al Capone on tax-evasion charges in the 1930s. WSJ says that Erdogan explained that one reason that Turkey resisted demands from the International Monetary

Fund to make the tax authority autonomous is because "we need to work hand in hand" with the tax service against the underground "black economy."

Editorial Commentary on Aydin Dogan-Al Capone
Columnist Ismet Berkan calls the Al Capone analogy an 'ugly depiction' in liberal Radikal: "PM Erdogan's entire explanation only indicates how much he is directly involved in the tax process and the fact about he is personally following every step of it. All of these invalidate any argument for calling this a routine tax inspection case."

Upcoming Events:

Q October 15: Prime Minister Erdogan and his cabinet ministers will convene with the Iraqi cabinet for a strategic-cooperation council meeting in Baghdad.

Q October 13: Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu will attend the Turkish-Dutch cooperation summit in The Hague.

Q October 13: Turkish Parliament will discuss a motion authorizing cross-border military operations into northern Iraq.

Q October 13: Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu and his Syrian counterpart al-Mouallem expected to sign bilateral visa waiver agreement

JEFFREY